



September 4, 2013

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

We, the undersigned, are again writing to convey our strong support for the Obama Administration's teacher education reform strategy as described in "Our Future, Our Teachers" and urge you to advance your policy through Executive action as quickly as possible. We made a similar request one year ago, and action is now long overdue. Further hesitation will only result in more students—and most likely minority students, students with disabilities, and students from low-income families—being taught by ineffective teachers.

Each year, some 200,000 school of education graduates and alternative route participants are newly placed in American classrooms. Too often, they themselves and their employers discover that they are ill-prepared to teach and as a consequence the children in their classes do not have the opportunity to learn to their utmost potential. Students from historically disadvantaged groups, who year after year are taught by the least effective teachers, are by far the most frequent victims—often with life-changing consequences—of the deficiencies in our teacher preparation and placement system.

We understand that the U.S. Department of Education, with broad input from the field through a formal negotiated rulemaking process, has developed regulations that would require states to: 1) meaningfully assess teacher preparation program performance; and, 2) hold programs accountable for results. Even though this group of non-federal stakeholders failed to reach consensus, we are pleased to see they came together behind the idea of tying teacher preparation program quality directly to the student outcomes of their graduates. We urge you to exercise your rightful authority in this matter and publicly release your draft regulations so that all interested parties may offer formal and detailed comments and the process can proceed with all due haste to final rulemaking.

Administrative action is sorely needed. Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) requires states to conduct an assessment of teacher preparation programs and identify and improve the lowest-performers. At present, such policies are the exception rather than the rule. Less than three percent of all institutions of higher education that prepare and train teachers have been identified as low-performing. Furthermore, since these requirements were put in place more than a decade ago, most states have *never* identified a *single* low-performing program. Each year, teacher preparation programs receive approximately \$4 billion in support from the

federal government. They have both a moral and legal responsibility to carry out the Title II requirements in a way that has a positive and dramatic impact on student learning.

Right now, we don't have good information for most teacher preparation programs on their graduates' impact on student learning and their performance in the classroom. A few states, such as Louisiana and Tennessee, have started to look at this data and see clear differences both between and within programs. In Tennessee, the most effective programs produced graduates who were 2-3 times more likely to be in the top quintile of teachers in the state, while the least effective programs produced graduates who were 2-3 times more likely to be in the bottom quintile.

In terms of student learning, research also shows that students with the most effective teachers on average advance a grade and a half on academic assessments in a single academic year, while students of similar backgrounds with the least effective teachers acquire about only *half* a grade level of learning in the same academic year. A recent study by TNTTP showed that teachers who affected higher outcomes for students *also* exhibited other positive qualities, according to surveys of the students in their classrooms. Students taught by such teachers were more likely to report that those same teachers cared more about them, made learning more enjoyable, and encouraged them to make greater effort in their studies.

The ultimate goal of formal and final regulations should be to ensure that the HEA Title II requirements around reporting and accountability have the effect that they were intended to—providing meaningful data on program quality and ensuring that low-performing programs are identified and improved. This may require the investment of some additional, targeted resources, particularly to minority serving institutions to ensure that the quality and diversity of the teaching force go hand in hand.

We hope the Administration also works with Congress to reauthorize HEA. But for now, deliberate and swift administrative action on Title II regulations is the best next step to advance these aims.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A+ Denver
Association of American Educators
Center for American Progress
Civic Builders
ConnCAN
Democracy Builders

Democrats for Education Reform
Education Reform Now
The Education Trust
Educators 4 Excellence
EdVoice
The Mind Trust
MinnCAN
National Alliance for Public Charter Schools
National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
National Council on Teacher Quality
NYCAN
Rhode Island Mayoral Academies
StudentsFirst
Success Academy Charter Schools
TeachPlus
Teach for America
TNTF

Identical letter will be sent to Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Director, Office of Management and Budget and Cecilia Munoz, Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council.